

Learnings and follow up action from a CF2CF-Exchange

Below are key learning points from an CF2CF exchange that took place between the Bucharest Community Foundation (Romania) and the Via Foundation Czech Republic) in 2018.

Key learnings for Bucharest Community Foundation

The most impressive and inspiring aha moments we had after the visit to Via Foundation were related to fundraising, capacity building of grantees and local communities and, of course, the ViabilityNet 3.0 program.

- **Fundraising:** that a large part of Via's budget is from individual donors; the establishment of a new/separate organization focused on philanthropy advising to maintain the independence; the existence of an ethical circle - where staff can decide not to go further with a certain donor; the Konsortium model for fundraising.
- **Capacity building:** the way community education program is designed right now to flexibly suit the needs of grantees; including former grantees in the review committees; releasing the grant application form to the applicants only after they came to consultations with the Foundation.
- **Leadership Program:** the fact that ViabilityNet 3.0 participants can use 10% of the grant for personal development; the introduction of the short video about the applicant and his/her community as part of the application for the program; the 3 values of the leadership program - trust in myself and others, change is normal and OK, empathy/solidarity (going towards community).

Inspired by all the things we saw and heard in Prague, we are planning to do the following things, at 3 levels of our work:

Programs

- We need to move forward with the Belonging dimension of the local community (which we've identified as being our main area of intervention after doing Vital Signs last year). We are going to do this through the community leadership program, through a themed fund, through social experiments (as a platform to communicate about the people in Bucharest generating social change #BucharestPoweredByPeople).

- About the leadership program specifically, we need to look deeper for a long term vision and what would be an MVP to be piloted next year. The program has to incorporate skills, experience and values and we are planning to generate the specific skills to be addressed in a participatory way, together with our grantees and allies.

Fundraising

- We plan to develop more structured and consequent stewardship plans for donors. But also a clearer ethical policy in relation with donors and have an ethical committee together with the board to review new donors, especially individual donors.
- We are going to look deeper into how we can adopt the Konsortium model.

Organizational processes

- We should involve every staff in working with our grantees
- To involve ex-grantees into our grants review committees
- Employing a more flexible program for our staff and working from our grantees' offices from time to time
- Looking further into the possibility of bringing Impact Academy in Romania. We already started a series of meetings with Ashoka Romania on this issue.

Key learnings for VIA Foundation

Via's aha moments and learning were related to shifting the power, community philanthropy events, the freedom to try new things and the Romanian context.

- **Shifting the power:** Learning about the Romanian CF movement and CFSOs was very relevant as we are thinking of how we can be more connected to local communities across the Czech Republic, how to be less centralized and how to build a better environment for philanthropy and community development in the country. In this sense, understanding the complexity of the CF support environment in Romania - ARC, the Federation of CFs, which organization does what and where tensions arise - was very enlightening and can help us understand the risks inherent in building a network of regional entities. Also, Alina's emphasis on the process of building trust; ARC's approach as a CFSO based in partnership, space to make mistakes, local ownership and an asset-based outlook; need for in-depth mapping when establishing CFs; and the current issue of CF sustainability.

- **Community philanthropy events:** It was very useful to hear about what BCF has learned through implementation of “8 Hours overtime for a good cause” and how it is adapting the event; the frankness about specific problems and lessons learned was much appreciated. The Swimathon event is also very appealing for the perspective of our peer-to-peer giving program and the CFB Open House event as a donor interaction.
- **Freedom to try new things:** BCF’s trial and error approach to SROI and Vital Signs was inspiring, the way you give yourself, as an organization, the freedom to try something new out and learn from it, especially the parts that don’t work so well.
- **Importance of understanding community impact:** BCF’s work with SROI confirmed in us the need to understand more deeply how our work impacts the community.
- **Romanian context:** An aha moment for Via was grasping the current context in Romania - the depth of the political corruption and the complete chasm between government and civil society - which is much more relevant to BCF now than e.g. liberal/conservative, urban/rural or other divisions that we see more in the Czech context.

Via is planning to use what it learned in Bucharest as follows:

Building a regional presence

We will apply what we learned about CFSOs and the Romanian CFs network to our efforts to build a regional presence in the Czech Republic. We see three directions now: a network of CFs, a network of community funds or a network of active people directly connected to Via. As we consider the options, understanding the roles and positions of different actors in the Romanian CFs landscape (CFs, CFSOs, the Federation) is a great help in grasping the risks and benefits of potential regional configurations. Our next steps are to discuss these directions with grantees in regions and those with a knowledge of the CF movement in the CR.

Events

- We are discussing and considering trying an “8 Hours overtime for a good cause” event in Prague.

- Two of our team members will participate in a Swimathon in the spring to get a feel for it and also organize their own mini team fundraising drive in the CR in 2019.

Freedom

This is about a shift in mindset, liberation in how we view our work: trial and error, especially error, is okay and actually useful, that influences how we work with staff and grantees and that can pervade all of our work e.g. impact measurement, interacting with grantees, regional presence.

Romanian context

This greater understanding of Romanians' real concerns today will help us in developing our new international program to make it as relevant as possible.

For further information on CF2CF exchanges contact mihaela@communityfoundations.eu